

John Curry telephone interview by Richard Killblane, 20 January 2004.



*5th Transportation Command
mouseover for description*

Major John Curry was the S4 of the 5th Terminal Command from July 1967 to May 1968. COL James McCloud commanded the 5th Term. He was a wonderful man. He took care of his troops and made sure his leaders took care of their troops. They made sure the soldiers were well fed, had sweets and dry place to sleep. Crew worked 10-hour shifts with 2 hours for maintain. Some stayed another 2 hours. They worked their butts off, 12 hour a day.

On the ships they had battery operated fork lifts. For maintenance they had to change the batteries. The batteries were only good for a few hours of operation. The crews had to turn them off after moving the cargo and stopping. They could have no sparks when down in the hold for fear of igniting the ammunition. The soldiers could wear no metal items that would cause static electricity such as belt buckles. Sailors on the *USS Monitor* had uniforms with rubber buttons. Officers had to check them for cigarette lighters.

5th Terminal Command had command of the 159th and 394th Battalions. The 159th discharged cargo in-stream and sent the boats to the beach. The 394th offloaded the ships at the pier and boats at the LST Beach. The pier consisted of two DeLong Piers head-to-head to form one long pier that could dock four ships at once. There were two ways to get to the pier. During the previous tour, the engineers had built a causeway to the DeLong pier 8 to 9 months before Major Curry arrived. That was during the tour of the first 5th Term crew. The second 5th Term crew put the finish touches to the causeway.

The stevedores moved the cargo to the end of the pier or off loaded it onto the beach. 8th Transportation Group and the Korean Han Jin trucks cleared cargo from the pier and beach as fast as they could. 5th Term did not want any cargo piling up. They could only store a little at pier. Trucks picked it up and hauled it to the storage yards at Cha Rang Valley. Trucks ran individually by day and by convoy at night. When trucks arrived at

Qui Nhon at night they cleared the ASP of all cargo. Every couple of days they loaded the ammo train to deliver to the Air Force base at Phu Cat.

Quincy Compound at Qui Nhon.

1098th Medium Boat Company was there along with the 1st Provisional BARC. CPT Bobby Vlastic commanded the BARC company. CPT Jimmy Cates had off loading company. Bob Frazier commanded the 1098th Medium Boat Company. He wanted the job of S4 after John Curry left so John put in a good word for him and Frazier got the job.

Tet Offensive, 31 January 1968.

After the fact they recognized that there were indicators that something serious was about to happen. The village people knew it had all the soldiers clothes washed so they did not have to go on the post. The Province Chief pulled out by helicopter the night before. The ARVN armored car company left after he did.

The shooting started at 0730, which was when the shift changed at the pier. Red flares started going up at the air strip. The VC had infiltrated the area over several days and were already in place when the attack started. Their objectives included the radio station, round house (rail), rail station, port, Vietnamese CIA headquarters and Provincial Chief. They took everything but the port. The VC/NVA came toward the beach. Handful of stevedores defended the pier because few had weapons. Vehicle Retriever (VCR) had two .50s on it. This fire power stopped the VC attack at the end of the pier.

The guys on the beach were scared. For some reason, the VC did not go near the beach.

John Curry drove in his jeep to get to the pier. He had been up in hills when he heard the shooting. He drove around the air field and saw people getting shot along the air field. Air Field security group nailed many of the VC. When he drove through town he saw four PAE guys in jeep who had been shot up. The Quan Cau (national police) also put up a hell of a fight in the town. They kept the main drag (shore road) on the outside of town open.

Most of the enemy had been doped up. John hit one guy five times and he did not fall. The regional force/provincial force (RFPP) were the village security force. They showed up from the village and helped defend the pier.

LCMs did not operate at night. They were parked along the beach when the fighting started. COL McCloud was at the pier before the fighting started. They told the LCMs to go get weapons and ammo. Did not need more people at first. The LCMs brought the M60s and more ammunition to the pier. The LCMs continued to supply the defenders with what they needed to survive over the next two days.

Bob Frazier had .50 machineguns on his LCMS and called for more ammunition. John asked what he had left. He said all he had was his basic load. He did not think he could

use it because of the requirement to always have their basic load on hand. John informed him that was what the basic load was for.

The Korean Tiger Division arrived two days later and had the enemy boxed in from the land so they could not escape. Fighting from house to house, they killed all the VC they could find.

VC took 2 ARVN and threw them in a fire. Disemboweled a VN girl, cut off hand. The Vietnamese barber was found dead among the dead VC. From then on John Curry never let a Vietnamese cut his hair. He had one of the soldiers do it.

COL Culman replaced COL McCloud.

Han Jin Company hauled any cargo to the depots in Cha Rang, not just for the Koreans.

During Tet the VC attacked the radio station and the railroad station. The Koreans trapped the VC in the round house and the ROKs blew it up and the locomotive. Saigon had to send a new one and brought it up on a C3. It caused the vessel to list to one side then when the crane lifted the locomotive off the deck, the ship straightened out and whipped the crew into the water.